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9 August 2007

Mr. Milford Wayne Donaldson  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
Office of Historic Preservation  
P. O. 942896  
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

RE: National Register of Historic Places Evaluation  
Amador Central Railroad, Amador County, California  
Surface Transportation Board Docket AB 512-X

Dear Mr. Donaldson:

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) served their decision on February 25, 2005 for STB Docket No. AB-512X (Sierra Pacific Industries [SPI] Abandonment Exemption in Amador County, California) and an embraced case, STB Docket No. AB-880X (SierraPine-Discontinuance Exemption-in Amador County, California). The case involved a petition by SPI and SierraPine seeking an exemption from agency regulation to allow abandonment of and discontinuance of service over the approximately 12-mile Amador Central rail line extending from a point at lone to a point at Martell, in Amador County, California. The STB voted 3-0 to grant the exemption, subject to public use, trails use, and environmental conditions.

**STB Environmental Conditions** Among the exemption approval conditions listed by the STB was the need to evaluate the affect of the rail line abandonment oh historic properties pursuant to the STB Environmental Rules (49 CFR 1105, Title 49-Transportation Chapter X-Surface Transportation Board, Department Of Transportation Part 1105 Procedures For Implementation Of Environmental Laws). These rules refer to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA; 16 U.S.C. 470(f)), which state that the federal agency (STB) must take into account the effect of their decision on properties included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and, thatpriorito approval of an undertaking, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) must be afforded a reasonable opportunity to comment. ACHP regulations for NHPA are found at Section 800 of Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 800). The work discussed below and in the attached document was conducted following procedures outlined in 36 CFR Part 800.

**Historic Preservation Work Conducted** The work conducted to analyze the affect of abandonment included discussions with various Amador County historical groups, a record search from the North Central Information Center, discussions with local tribes and contact with the California Native American Heritage Commission, archaeological survey of the railroad grade from lone to Highway 49 in Martell, research into the historic archives, preparation of a background history for the Amador Central Railroad, documentation and evaluation of the surviving railroad buildings, and evaluation of the railroad complex for the NRHP. These tasks are reported in the enclosed Amador Centra/ Railroad (Amador County, California) National Register of Historic Places Evaluation Report, by Shelly Davis-King, Deborah Cook, and Judith Marvin. Work was conducted by professionals who meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards.

**Brief Railroad History** The Amador Central Railroad is a short line, standard-gauge railway that extends from lone to Martell, with a reputation as the curviest and slowest traveled railway in California. The Amador Central's predecessor company, the lone & Eastern Railroad, completed a rail line to Martell in 1905, when many of the buildings there were erected. In 1908 the company was taken over by the Amador Central, continuing in operation under various entities until purchased by the Winton Lumber Company in

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1945. During its first four decades, the line served the mines, passengers, clay industry, and freight from the Jackson-Sutter Creek area to lone where it connected with the Southern Pacific Railroad. Under Winton's ownership a new turntable was constructed, tracks were converted to 80-lb. rail, and other improvements were completed. From 1945 on, the line was primarily used to transport lumber, although from the 1930s through the 1950s the equipment for Pacific Gas & Electric Company's Mokelumne River powerplants was shipped on the railroad. The Winton Lumber Company was taken over by American Forest Products in 1964, by Georgia Pacific in 1988, and by SPI in 1997. In 1998 SierraPine purchased the particleboard facility and become the sole user of the rail line for wood product until 2004. The majority of the railroad is currently leased and maintained by the Recreation Railroad Coalition, a mutual benefit corporation that works to preserve America's historic railroad corridors.

**NRHP Eligibility Assessment** The results of the field, archival, and architectural surveys suggest that the Amador Central Railroad has sufficient historic importance and surviving integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, association, design, and feeling to be considered eligible for the NRHP under the themes of railroad transportation and logging, with the period of significance (1904-1964) being from the early years of station and rail construction from lone (1904) to 1964 when the Winton Lumber Company sold their mHI and railroad. Through those first 60 years, the railroad continued to operate and support county industries, the transportation of schoolchildren and goods, and otherwise connect the citizens of Amador County with the rest of the state. The Martell depot, engine house, shop, turntable, trackage, switch, and signal features, constructed from 1905 to the mid-1940s, are a unique complex among only a few surviving examples of a railroad terminal from that era in the Mother Lode region of California. The railroad itself, constructed in the years 1904-1906 is also unique in this region as a surviving, still functional railroad, albeit not for commerce.

The Amador Central District appears eligible for listing on the National Register under criteria a and c, at the local level of significance. The Martell complex and lone & Eastern/Amador Central Railroad played an important role in transporting freight, passengers, supplies for the mines, ores to the Selby Smelter, clay products from lone, and lumber from Martell. These were all important activities and industries in early Amador County suggesting that the district is eligible under criterion a for its contributions to county history and support of county economy. Under Criterion c, the railroad, railroad features, complex of buildings, and associated resources are one of only a few surviving examples of an early 1900s railroad and terminal in the Mother Lode. The railroad conveys the appearance and condition of its period of significance. Although in poor condition, the original Martell depot, freight shed, engine house, shop/barn, turntable, and trackage, signals, and switches retain their integrity to their period of significance (1905-1950) to a remarkable degree. The railroad complex has been recorded as a District on Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) 523 forms, included as Attachment C in the technical survey report.

There have been some modifications to the railroad complex over the years. These include the periodic replacement of ties, fishplates, spikes, and ballast, but such replacements are part of any functioning industrial system. These replacements have insured that the railroad's high integrity of location and setting are in place, while the materials, workmanship, and design of these materials have remained relatively constant and unchanged from the earliest years. Many original materials survive, as indicated by the date stamps on the rails. Eleven of the original trestles have been replaced with filled-in culverts, but these too have been in place for some 60 years or more and meet the test of age. Landscape features (borrow areas) associated with the fills also provide setting and association characteristics. Related sites, such as Firebrick, Lanes, the Newton Mine, the lone Canal, and the clay deposits provide additional contextual integrity.

Upon leaving the Martell depot and its associated buildings, travel westerly down the railroad passing by the industrial complex at the former mill site and traversing through the countryside to Mountain Springs,

conveys setting and feeling that are virtually unchanged from the earliest days. The old Vogan Toll Road can still be viewed in the unaltered valley, while features such as historic ranches, the stone corral, and historic roads add to the sense of travel in the early 1900s. At Mountain Springs and Sunnybrook the railroad passes through the ranching and mining areas that remain largely undeveloped and intact, providing added feeling. Spurs are visible, as are switches and road crossings, so that by journey's end in lone, one passes by the wye, the derail spur and the former water tanks ending at the lone Academy High School that was so important to the continuance of the railroad as a common carrier. Overall the view of the landscape from the railroad grade is remarkably intact, looking much as it might have during the period of significance.

Associated Resources Three type/theme resources are located adjacent to the railroad grade: industrial facilities, ranch/settlement resources, and water conveyance structures. Among the industrial remains are (1) Firebrick, a brick-making facility that utilized the Amador Central to transfer finished products, (2) Lanes, with remnants of clay extraction/mining activities, a small spur, and a possible loading dock, (3) Sunnybrook, with two generations of platforms of structural support pads, possibly a railroad feature of water tanks for the engines, and (4) the ceramic fireclay extraction open pits. Ranch settlement resources consist of two archaeological sites. The first, near Lanes, is a former residence location whose last use was likely in the late 1950s to early 1960s based on artifacts. Near Sunnybrook there is a small archaeological site of unknown age and affiliation that consists of a well opening, concrete pad (6.5 x 6 feet), and miscellaneous metal artifacts. None of these resources were documented or evaluated as they appear either to be largely outside of the railroad alignment or because there is no identifiable effect as a result of abandonment. The final resource category located in the railroad easement or right of way is the lone Canal, an abandoned canal constructed in the mid-1850s to divert water from Sutter Creek to placer mines near lone. While it crosses the railroad in several places, the lone Canal was evaluated as ineligible for the NRHP in 1999 as part of the Federal Highways Administration/State Office of Historic Preservation consultation for the Amador Bypass Project and was not considered in these studies.

Requested Action The STB has authorized SPI to forward the enclosed evaluation report to your office for review (see attached electronic mail transmission from Christa L. Dean, STB Environmental Analysis Attorney). We request your concurrence with the eligibility assessment of the Amador Central Railroad Historic District. Upon concurrence we will prepare an assessment of effect and management plan for your review.

Sincerely,



Shelly Davis-King, M.A., R.P.A.

cc: XChrista Dean, STB  
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